

**Moving People: The
search for tomorrow**

April 13, 1981

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**Mexico's railroad
renaissance**

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Editorial and Executive Offices
New York, N.Y. 10014, 345 Hudson Street
212/620-7200

ROBERT G. LEWIS, Publisher
LUTHER S. MILLER, Editor

Associate Editors

June Meyer, Mark Coleman
Contributing Editor: William D. Middleton
Art Director: Maurice H. Mates
Graphics Director: Martin Kossoy

Marketing and Sales: William J. Cavenagh
Production: Mike Figa, Jr., Maryann Fazio
Manager-Contract Department: Connie Lubrano
Manager-Circulation: Kenneth Young
Manager-Fulfillment: Joyce DeFilippi

Editorial and Executive Offices
Chicago, Ill. 60602, 29 E. Madison St.
312/641-5815

GUS WELTY, Senior Editor
Associate Editor: Frank Malone
Engineering Editor: William J. Semioli
Consulting Editor: Merwin H. Dick
Editorial Assistant: Wanda Welfy

Washington, D.C. 20045, National Press Bldg.
202/347-1155

Associate Editors

John H. Armstrong, Tom Kizzia

Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 4RJ, England
P.O. Box 8 (Cable: MISBOARD)
Telephone: 44-326-313945

International Editors

John Levett, Michael Knutton

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Inside



LUTHER S. MILLER

THE MEXICAN CONNECTION

Mexico's railroad system, which is 100 years old and looks every day of it, is going through the pangs of rebirth. It is a costly process and sometimes a painfully slow one. You don't undo, in a year or two, the effects of decades of neglect and malnutrition. But no one doubts that the end result will be worth all of the time and the money: a rail system capable of participating fully in Mexico's industrial redevelopment. Oil is paying for the industrialization of this once-poor country, and oil is helping to pay for a sweeping rehabilitation of its railroads.

What is happening in Mexico is winning much attention—and applause—north of the border. For one thing, Mexico's railroads are increasingly important connections for U.S. carriers, which are funneling raw and manufactured materials by the thousands of carloads into a system that is ill-equipped to handle the traffic. (Up to 36,000 cars have recently been jammed up at frontier crossing points.) For another, Mexico's multi-billion-dollar rail renovation is providing welcome markets for U.S. and Canadian suppliers at a time when domestic markets are sagging.

Associate Editor Frank Malone recently spent a week in Mexico, visiting construction sites and shops and interviewing key railway officers. His report starts on p. 22.

It has been said before, but this time it can be said with considerable conviction: For Mexico's railways, *manana* appears finally to be arriving.

PASSENGER TRAINS, OVER THERE AND OVER HERE

In recent months we have been reporting on the awakening interest at the state level in high-speed intercity passenger train service. California and Ohio in particular have said they want a level of service beyond that which Amtrak has been able to provide—and they have been looking to Europe and Japan for guidance. Europe and Japan, eager to find new markets for their advanced passenger technology, have been sending emissaries and teams of consultants to this country to work with state planners.

Japan's bullet trains, which have captured the imagination of Ohio planners, are well known. Less well known perhaps, in the U.S., is the state of the art in Europe. With that in mind, we assigned Associate Editor Tom Kizzia to spend a few weeks in Britain, France, and Germany to find out what those countries are offering to the U.S.—and how likely (or unlikely) it is that the U.S. will buy. The assignment was made several months ago; it was completed in February.

By coincidence, Tom's story on his European odyssey (p. 46) is published in the same issue that carries our story on Amtrak's 10th birthday (p. 38)—a story that suggests that this milestone may be Amtrak's last as a truly national carrier.

While it wasn't planned this way originally, the publication of these two stories cheek to jowl may at least serve to remind our readers that the whole world hasn't gone mad.

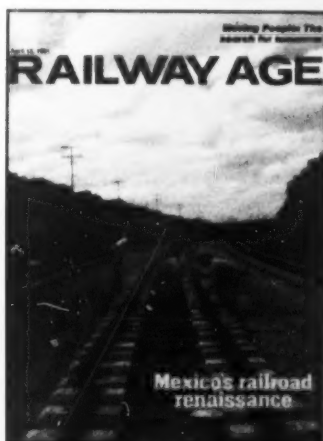
PUTTING CHESSIE BACK ON THE MAP

We called our Mar. 30 story on CSX "A merger of equals." But, alas, the map that appeared with that story showed only one half of this splendid amalgamation—SCL Industries' Family Lines. Omitted, because our printer dropped the blue color plate, was the Chessie System. We have now reprinted that article, complete with the front cover—and a complete map. Readers who would like to have a copy may get one by writing to our publisher.

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FEATURES



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Page 46

22 Rail renaissance in Mexico

A massive, multi-billion-dollar renovation of Mexico's railroads is well under way. It includes a new electrified line, numerous rebuilt lines, four yards, and thousands of cars and locomotives, many from the U.S. and Canada.

30 Mexico's amazing Metro

Already handling a staggering passenger load (2.5 million riders a day) on a 31.6-mile system, Mexico City's subway will double rideship with the opening of 20.4 more miles in 1982. Some planners see a 198-mile system by year 2000.

38 For Amtrak, a not-so-happy anniversary

Approaching its 10th birthday, Amtrak is fighting for its life as a national passenger carrier. President Alan S. Boyd says the budget cut proposed by the Reagan Administration would limit future service to the Northeast Corridor.

46 The search for tomorrow

The great train race is gathering speed in Europe, and the U.S. is a most interested bystander, especially at the state level. The main contenders: France's TGV, Britain's APT, Germany's maglev. At stake is a world-wide market.

59 Conrail: Sale — or salvation?

The DOT wants to give Conrail only enough money to keep it going pending a "fire sale." Conrail believes that given enough time it can become self-sustaining. USRA wants to give the railroad at least another two years.

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COVER: Associate Editor Frank Malone photographed this three-track section of NdeM's new electrified Mexico City-Irapuato line.

Market

CARLOADINGS

Loadings of revenue freight in the week ended Mar. 21 totaled 463,089 cars, according to the Association of American Railroads. This was a decrease of 10,725 cars, or 0.2%, compared with the corresponding week last year. Ton-miles generated by carloadings in the week ended Mar. 21 are estimated at 19.4 billion, a decrease of 0.1% below the corresponding week of 1980.

REVENUE FREIGHT CARLOADINGS

Commodity	Mar. 21 week	Mar. 14 week
Grain	27,396	26,964
Farm products	3,376	3,773
Metallic ores	27,837	29,192
Coal	135,341	120,763
Crushed stone, gravel & sand	12,337	12,932
Nonmetallic minerals	13,501	13,496
Grain mill products	15,682	15,459
Food and kindred products	16,462	16,174
Primary forest products	19,592	19,744
Lumber & wood products (except furniture)	9,009	8,543
Pulp, paper & allied products	20,649	20,214
Chemicals & allied products	30,399	29,327
Petroleum products	5,019	5,318
Stone, clay & glass products	14,911	14,680
Coke	6,545	6,481
Metals & products	17,527	16,806
Motor vehicles & equipment	18,866	18,586
Waste & scrap materials	13,801	14,524
Forwarder & shipping assn. traffic	11,246	11,199
All other carloads	43,322	43,853
LCL traffic	271	448
Total cars loaded	463,089	448,476
Cumulative total,		
12 weeks	5,167,865	5,279,081
Estimated revenue ton-miles		
(billions) 12 weeks	215.9	213.9

PIGGYBACK LOADINGS

U.S. piggyback loadings for the week ended Mar. 14 totaled 34,401 cars (2.3% below the corresponding 1980 week) and 62,259 trailers or containers (down 2.5% from 1980). Cumulative volume for the first 11 weeks of 1981 is 345,133 cars (down 6.2% from 1980) and 624,205 trailers or containers (down 6.3% from 1980).

CANADIAN CARLOADINGS

Canadian railway revenue freight loaded in the seven-day period ended Feb. 28 totaled 5.2 million tons (down 9.9% from 1980). Cars loaded totaled 76,199 (down 11.9% from 1980). Cumulative loadings for 1981 were 39.1 million tons (down slightly from 1980.) 1980)

● **National Railways of Mexico (NdeM).**—Spending for improvements in 1981 will total about \$460 million, as follows: \$325 million for new cars and locomotives; \$59.3 million for installation of new or used rail and construction or lengthening of sidings; \$7.7 million for bridges and related structures; \$15.6 million for yards and shops; \$12.1 million for new track machinery; \$29.1 million for communications and signaling, especially for etc; and \$10.7 million for new shop equipment. (Not included in the NdeM budget is new track construction, which is financed by the Ministry of Transport and Communications.)

● **PLM Railcar Maintenance Co.**—Has negotiated coal-car maintenance contracts with Wisconsin Power & Light Co., Madison, Wis., and Unitrain, Inc., a subsidiary of Iowa Resources Inc., Des Moines. Under the contract with WP&L, PLM will maintain 830 cars that carry coal from the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming. This contract raises the total number of cars maintained at PLM's Miles City, Mont., shop to 1,300. Under the Unitrain contract, PLM will maintain 505 coal cars at its Alliance, Neb., shop, which now has over 4,300 cars under long-term contract.

● **San Diego Metropolitan Transit Board.**—A \$1-million contract has been awarded to WABCO's Union Switch & Signal Division for train control and highway grade crossing equipment for MTB's new light rail transit system (RA, June 9, p. 34). Union Switch will supply an absolute block signal system plus 27 grade crossing warning installations including automatic gates and flashing lights. The contract was awarded by Fishback and Moore, Inc.

● **Snowmass Coal Co.**—Awarded a contract to Dravo Corp. to design and construct a truck-to-train coal-loading facility near Carbon-dale, Colo. Scheduled for completion in mid-1981, the facility will unload coal from trucks and move it approximately 2,000 feet, via a 500-ton-per-hour conveyor, to a railyard. The conveyor will load rail-cars through a surge bin and loadout gate.

● **Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Portland).**—Will open bids May 14 for 26 light rail vehicles. The qualified bidders are Bombardier of Canada and Siemens-DuWag of Germany.

● **VIA Rail Canada.**—Retained the Toronto-based engineering and planning firm of Cole, Sherman to conduct a \$500,000 study of maintenance and repair operations across Canada. Cole, Sherman has engaged Transmark, British Rail's consulting firm, to assist in the study.

